

Huntington Station, NY—On Monday, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) and National Guard and Reserve Members discussed the impact of equipment and staffing shortages on the New York National Guard. A report recently released by Congressman Israel and Governor Spitzer revealed that the New York National Guard has only 35 percent of the mission critical transportation equipment it needs to respond to a homeland security emergency such as a terrorist attack or a hurricane. It is also only funded at 61 percent of its full time requirements for staffing and at 41 percent of authorized equipment.

“It’s not a matter of if, but when, a hurricane will strike Long Island. A fully staffed and equipped National Guard is the difference between a smooth recovery and another New Orleans,” said Congressman Israel, who serves on the House Appropriations Committee and previously served on the Armed Services Committee. “The New York National Guard is critical to our homeland security and we need to ensure that they are equipped to respond to domestic terrorist attacks and natural disasters. That is why I am committed to working with Governor Spitzer to make sure the New York National Guard has the staffing levels and the equipment it needs.”

“I’m very happy that my elected official, Congressman Israel, is taking the bull by the horns on this issue,” said reservist Stephen Labate of Deer Park. “Members of the National Guard deserve 110% of our support across the board.”

"I commend Congressman Israel for drawing attention to the challenges the war in Iraq and overseas deployments have placed on the New York National Guard," said Governor Spitzer. "New York's National Guard troops have a long history of distinguished service. We cannot permit the Guard's critical domestic responsibility to respond to homeland security threats and natural disasters be compromised because of staffing and equipment deficiencies."

“From responding to natural disasters and guarding critical infrastructure here at home to supporting national military objectives overseas, today’s National Guard is doing more than ever before,” said Adjutant General Major General Joseph Taluto Jr. “The Guard has transformed from a second-string strategic reserve force, into a fully-engaged operational reserve force, yet the resourcing shortfalls remain. The tremendous leadership Governor Spitzer and Congressman Israel are exerting on this issue will help ensure these resourcing shortfalls are finally addressed so they do not diminish the Guard's tremendous capability to support the citizens of our state and nation.”

The chief of the Pentagon's National Guard Bureau testified before Congress that at least two-thirds of his units in the United States are not combat-ready. Additionally, a January 2007 report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the Department of Defense (DOD) does not measure or report to Congress on the equipment readiness of nondeployed units as it relates to domestic missions.

Additionally, the GAO found that states, on average, have only half of the authorized equipment available for domestic use. Between 75,000 and 100,000 pieces of National Guard equipment - worth nearly \$2 billion - are now in Iraq and Afghanistan instead of National Guard armories around the United States.

While the entire Army National Guard is underfunded, the New York National Guard is resourced below the national average. The results of the report requested by Spitzer and Israel show that the New York National Guard is only funded at 61 percent of its full time requirements for staffing and at 41 percent of authorized equipment. Even if all the equipment was returned from overseas, the New York National Guard would only be at 48 percent of authorized equipment levels.